

MISSIONARY LIFE — IN ALASKA



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WHETHER justly or not, we are apt to measure the hardships of missionary life by the degree of removal from the rest of the world that is experienced by the missionary. When

India and China were at the farther end of a long sailing voyage, in the days before telegraphs and telephones, it meant infinitely more of privation than it does to-day to go as a missionary to those countries. Interior China and the heart of Africa, with Tibet, are the modern examples of what we used to know as missionary lands. Where trade and mechanics go, the missionary no longer counts it hardship to follow.

Measured by the standard of isolation, our missionaries on the island of Unalaska, at the extreme southwest of the Aleutian "stepping-stones to Asia," rank with other faithful pioneers in unknown lands. Dr. Newhall, for several years superintendent of Jesse Lee Industrial Home of the Woman's Home Missionary Society, said:

"It is now going on four months since we were completely isolated from the world. We are still wondering what were the results of the annual meeting.

"This has been the severest winter we have known. For more than five weeks at one time it was almost a continual storm. It has been mostly snow and wind.

"The work at the Home is going on well. We have plenty to eat, and our credit is good for enough coal to keep us warm—about five tons a month this winter. We buy our next year's supply of food in May. We send our order in February. This year it may be late in being delivered, as there has been no communication with the outside world.

"Please do not be alarmed about the work or needs. Of course there is no surplus in the treasury, in fact there is not a red cent, and has not been for some time, but mail and money are only delayed in the coming. Every day we scan the horizon to discover some trace of smoke, but all in vain."

Eleven days later Dr. Newhall adds a post-script, saying: "The mail has come. I received forty-seven letters, and as the boat stays only a few hours I am very busy."

With all of these deprivations there is nothing but cheer in Dr. Newhall's letters. He closes by saying: "We trust that all is well in the homeland, and that the interest in the Alaskan work continues."

Enclosed in his letter are most interesting sketches of Christmas at Jesse Lee Home. We can quote but a single paragraph:

"Some of the children had never even seen a tree, to say nothing of a beautiful Christmas tree. The snow was deep, and along the sea walk the waves had washed upon it, making a salt slush that did not harden or pack down by travel. Moreover, the cows had used the same path, and there were deep holes where they had sunk in the snow. At times it was snowing quite like a blizzard. Yet in spite of all this the room was filled with natives and the few whites who reside there, including the Bishop and priests of the Russian-Greek Church."

Through other correspondence and the reports of the superintendent, we have further glimpses of the meaning of "missionary life in Alaska." It is not all snow and ice and storm. Of October one of the teachers writes: "The weather has been glorious, so much sun-

shine and balmy air, and the snows on the mountains have added zest to the surroundings. Between the inspiration of the loving hearts around and the glory of the hills, I feel on the heights continually.

"The children are so sweet, and show so plainly the effect of the labor of love spent on them. The United States Marshal said of them the other day, 'I think those children from the Home are the finest-looking lot of children I ever saw. Why, they look as if they had such good care, they are so fat and happy-looking, and dressed so comfortably.'

"We have not a very beautiful schoolroom, nor is it very convenient, but it is far better than none, and I enjoy every hour in it!" And then she adds, in the same triumphant tone of victory, "I cannot see where the trials of a missionary's life are. There is deprivation of the society of friends, but thoughts can travel so fast, and it is easy to be with them after all."

From thirty to forty children, Aleut and Eskimo, are cared for in Jesse Lee Home. As in all of the Industrial Homes of the W. H. M. S., the teaching includes housework, cooking and sewing, and, with the boys, gardening. A feature peculiar to this Home is the fishing. In the good boat Perchment—named for the friend who made its purchase possible—the superintendent and older boys go out for the salmon catch by means of which they supply an important share of the food needed in the Home. Berries are picked and carefully dried during the short summer, and the garden yields abundant supply of vegetables. Butter enough is made in the summer for daily needs and for the winter's store.

People get sick in Unalaska, as well as elsewhere—and whites as well as natives, for the island is a favorite stopping place for whaling vessels. What with sickness and accidents, and difficulties requiring surgical treatment, there has been pitiful need of a Christian hospital on the island. Provision to meet this need has been made by the W. H. M. S., and

the hospital is an untold blessing to all who come under its influence or within reach of its help.

Of Alaskan needs but little can be said here. They are the needs inseparable from a life of semi-heathenism and gross ignorance. But the coming of civilization, through whalers and traders, has brought another and a terrible danger for Alaskan girls. We quote from an impassioned appeal in their behalf, written by one familiar with the facts through personal residence:

"God pity native orphan girls whose lot
Is cast upon Alaska's western isles.

There, they are less than chattels sold and
bought—

The vilest white-skinned riff-raff that de-
files

Our land has rights that no one dare gain-
say,

But not the least respected rights have
they."

Alas, for the girls sold "for toil degrading first, then purpose base." With Jesse Lee Home as a starting point, we should have other lighthouses of hope and cheer, all through that land, until it will be no longer possible for child life to pass into such pitiful eclipse.

WOMAN'S HOME MISSIONARY SOCIETY
METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

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New York City

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